

BRITISH-EUROPEAN REGIONAL TOURISM IN THE WAKE OF BREXIT: WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

July 11, 2016 by Asaf Leshem



For most people who have been watching the story of Brexit unfold, it's been mostly about the political and economic implications. Moreover, the focus is on the impact Brexit will have on the British people. Concentrating on various aspects of tourism in the region, this blog entry will show how Brexit has more far-reaching effects which go beyond purely economic or political issues in Britain, and will affect societies across Europe.

In the tourism industry there are those who are already talking about immediate financial implications driven by consumer behaviour, expectations, and drop in confidence due to uncertainty. And losing money, it seems, is not the only aspect of tourism where things could take a nasty turn.

But let's start with money...

If badly negotiated, Brexit will jeopardise free movement of goods, thus making costs for the hospitality industry higher, costs which will undoubtedly fall on the tourists.

[Hotel](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html?#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx%2FRmRWbVNteGZDUmNpY) (http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html?#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx%2FRmRWbVNteGZDUmNpY)

consumers of service goods are all likely to pay higher prices on their

se for a predicted rise in costs. Recruiting foreign nationals for the lower that is likely to suffer from the Brexit. Admittedly, tourism businesses are s for those who work in low paid jobs in

[#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx%2FaWcycWYwUUQ2RHVBV](http://d.7769domain.com/r/rd.html?#http%3A%2F%2F7769domain.com%2FAd%2FGoIEx%2FaWcycWYwUUQ2RHVBV) millions of people around the world they are a good option. The outcomes

pected to create great uncertainty for both businesses and their

already involves a constant seasonal guessing game when it comes to staff to employ and when.



Brexit shot the British tourism industry in the foot

In terms of annual spend, the most important markets are continental Europe's "big four": German, France, Spain and Italy; together worth around £4.5bn. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/brexit-british-tourism-impact-eu-referendum-a7066371.html>) There are 5,500,000 visits to the UK from the top five European countries, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands (Tanzer and Pickett, 2016). In the short term the weakening of the Pound may increase this number slightly. Travel writer Simon Calder from The Independent claims that increased visitation by Europeans with their stronger Euro is a logical assumption. And yes, more people will be able to afford more travel to the UK, but even with a weaker Pound the UK will not suddenly turn from one of the most expensive destinations in the world to a cheap holiday escape. As Deidre Well, the Chief Executive of UK Inbound suggests: (<http://www.euronews.com/2016/06/10/brexit-good-or-bad-for-british-tourism/>) "it is described as economic suicide... why would you deliberately remove yourself from a market that provides two thirds of our business for our members?".



(http://socialscienceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/13621581_1547648885545045_1410130916_o.jpg)

Wanderlust

Continental Europe is still the main destination for British holidaymakers. In fact, 76% of British holidays abroad are to EU countries (Tanzer and Pickett, 2016). Depending on Brexit-EU negotiations, going on a stag weekend to Berlin, the loyal friends of the 'victim' might suffer a bigger dent in their pockets due to hotel and beer costs, and a lesser ability to shop. Presumably, net airline costs will change, if the examples of Norway and Switzerland are of any indication.

The bigger urban destinations like Paris, Rome and Berlin are strong enough to endure a slowdown of inbound British tourism, partly due to strengthening of other much bigger markets (e.g. China and India). Other European rural destinations, and of course the Brits favourite Mediterranean destinations, are predicted to suffer from a painful drop in inbound tourism from the UK.

EU investment in tourism and environmental conversation

One of the benefits of having the EU as a 'big daddy' often meant investment in developing projects for nature conservation, and with that, supporting local authorities in investing in the kind of tourism infrastructure that helps with protecting ecosystems local people in the UK hold so dear. Nick Trend from the Telegraph (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/comment/what-would-brexit-mean-for-travellers/>) gives the example of how in the last 25 years the pollution of raw sewage onto UK beaches was reduced significantly.

Investing in environmental protection visitor centres, and other eco-friendly-tourism-friendly projects has a more significant impact in areas that are often considered economically disadvantaged, like Cornwall and Wales. One famous example is the Eden Project in Cornwall, where the EU invested £26 m. The project employs some 400 people, contributing an estimated £1.7 bn to the region's economy. <http://www.edenproject.com/eden-story/about-us/our-funding>

Furthermore, the new UK will have thousands of EU regulations to consider whether they want to keep/replicate – will tourism management regulations in nature protected areas receive the same attention as they did in the past? I would argue that tourists are not inherently badly behaved, but for ecosystems to gain the benefits from tourism without suffering tourism 'footprints', it takes investment in educating for social change. An investment, both in terms of money and knowledge exchange, that the EU was a big part of.



(http://socialscienceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/13663387_1547648842211716_169776502_o.jpg)

Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFRs)

VFRs are notoriously problematic for measuring tourism statistics. Families could have different passports (one will register, the other will not) and they – almost by definition – stay with their friends or relatives (and hence are not registered in hotels). The economic impact of limited mobility could be colossal. In the EU, VFR alone amounts to more than 30 million trips every year. And while they may not be the joy of the hotel industry, they certainly are a significant economic driver simply by usually staying longer at the destination, and spending on goods and services.

The impact on the ‘foot soldiers’ of the tourism industry

Very often, hospitality staff, working mainly in hotels and restaurants, are the first ones to be ‘punished’ by wars and drastic political decisions (Singh, 2008). If the experts are right in their predictions that the newly posed challenges for travel will significantly reduce tourism in the EU, then a variety of people, from taxi drivers to tour guides, catering workers and small business owners, will pay the price.

In a comprehensive impact article by Tim Chester and Lisa Hearon, Spain’s Foreign Minister, Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo is quoted saying that in the case of a leave vote, the Spanish government will be talking about Gibraltar the “very next day”. A reported 10,000 Spanish people cross every day to work in Gibraltar, many employed in the tourism

industry; a Spanish government decision to make the border harder to cross will most likely punish these Spanish workers rather than the Brexiters.

Impacts reaching beyond costs and figures

Prof. Volker Böttcher explains the risk to UK inbound tourism less in terms of economic factors and more in terms of socio-political ones: Brexit sends negative political message to those who may consider visiting the UK. In other words, even if a potential European tourist now has a better purchasing power in Britain, they might perceive Brexit as a xenophobic statement against them. And who wants to visit a destination where they don't feel welcome? Deutsche Welle (<http://www.dw.com/en/the-effect-of-brexit-on-tourism/a-19360319>) quotes a (pre-referendum) study by Travelzoo stating that a third of travellers from Germany, Italy and Spain will be less inclined to visit the UK in case of a leave vote.

Part of the post Second World War dream of uniting Europe was to get the movement of tourist to know the 'other', those who only a few years before were mortal enemies. Rightfully so, this has not gone unnoticed by tourism social scientists. Wohlmuther and Wintersteiner (2013) for example, remind us of the post both world wars optimism, when citizens were encouraged to travel to neighbouring European countries, so that people would better understand their former enemies, and countries would avoid more bloody wars.

But if for good reasons it seems like such promotion has failed, it is partly because there are always those who encourage that. As Prof. William Wei explains that stereotypes "*are a function of social relations between groups or political relations between nations, not extensive personal experience or knowledge.*"

And if done right, tourism is exactly this personal experience Prof. Wei refers to. To support that notion, Wall and Matheison (2006) bring Peters's approach from 1969, stating that the social benefits of travel arise from widening our knowledge of foreigners and foreign tastes. So maybe we're just doing it wrong? Larry Dwyer, for example, argues for a more responsible tourism industry, if we want to see tourism as a driver for peace rather than a mere commercial 'industry'. For all its faults and negative impacts, European tourism may still be hailed as the 'peace industry' to keep British and European citizens from the social polarisation so many people now fear.

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One response to “British-European regional tourism in the wake of Brexit: What could possibly go wrong?”

1.  **Cash** (<http://ssovefv.com>) says:

October 20, 2016 at 7:20 am (<http://socialscienceworks.org/2016/07/british-european-regional-tourism-in-the-wake-of-brex-it-what-could-possibly-go-wrong/#comment-1033>)

If it was the transition to a big kid bed should be amazingly easy! Since we come in and tuck the kids in anyways I don't see why putting them into bed would be any different. Good luck, and let me know how it goes!

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Social Science Works

March 14th, 11:53 am

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Certificates for the participants in the Multiplier Workshops are going in the post today! Here's a sneak peak!

If you're interested in participating in the next round of workshops, please

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